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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

SWEARING IN CEREMONY OF
RICHARD HELMS AS DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

THE EAST ROOM

10:00 A.M. EDST

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Helms, members of the Cabinet, distinguished members of the Congress, my friends.

It was a little more than a year ago that I asked Admiral Raborn to come out of a hard earned retirement in California to take on one of the most critical tasks in Government and to succeed a great Director, John McCone, as head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

I knew that I was asking a great deal of this good man. He had already served his country long and well. He had capped his career by playing a vital role in the development of the Polaris missile system. But once again I felt that his country needed him and the President needed him, and he complied - a little reluctantly - with my request. He agreed to make still one more contribution to the security of his country and he attached only one condition, that he could leave as soon as we decided upon a permanent successor.

We have come to the White House this morning because both Admiral Raborn and I are satisfied that we have found the best man available as that successor. Both of us have worked closely during the past fourteen months with the very able public servant whom we are swearing in today as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and who became a partner of Admiral Raborn as his Deputy by appointment at the same time the Admiral was selected.

I am extremely proud of both of these men and their colleagues. The nature of their work does not often allow public acknowledgement. Praised or damned (and we are living in an era where men who spend all their time concerned with the protection of the security of their country are frequently damned more than they are praised) these men must go about their work without standing up for bows and of speaking out in their own defense. Their role is misunderstood by some of their supporters, and I never read a morning paper without seeing it being distorted by their critics.

In two and a half years of working with these men I have yet to meet a "007." I have met dozens of men who are moved and motivated by the highest and most patriotic and dedicated purposes - men who are specialists in economics and political science and history and geography and physics and many other fields where logic and analysis are crucial to the decisions that the President of their country is called upon to make. Through my experience with these men I have learned that their most significant triumphs come not in the secrets passed in the dark but in patient reading, hour after hour, of highly technical periodicals.

In a real sense they are America's professional students; they are unsung just as they are invaluable.

I do not want this opportunity to pass without at least this President paying great tribute, high respect, absolute complete confidence and all the recognition that I am capable of giving to patriots like Allen Dulles and John McCone and Admiral Raborn.

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In naming Richard Helms to the post of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency on the eve of this hopeful event and wishing godspeed to Admiral Raborn, we pause to give them the nation's thanks for a job well done. A little later at his convenience Admiral Raborn will return to the White House to receive a very high recognition and award from the President in the company of the Cabinet and others for the outstanding job he has done.

It is a very special pleasure to me, to one who has spent thirty-five years in the Federal Government (not always under the protective arm of the Secret Service or the Civil Service) to see one of the high positions in this Government filled by a man who has devoted his entire career to the public service of his country. Dick Helms, the man we are naming to this post, is such a man.

Although he has spent more than twenty years in public life attempting to avoid publicity, he has never been able to conceal the fact that he is one of the most trusted and most able and most dedicated professional career men in this Capitol. No man has ever come to this high critical office with better qualifications.

I think it was Patrick Henry who said, "The battle is not to the strong alone, it is to the vigilant and to the active and to the brave," and it is to Dick Helms and to the Agency that he will now head that we must look for this vigilance. His own record and the past achievements of his Agency give us full confidence in the future operation of the Central Intelligence Agency with judgment, with intelligence and above all with great public integrity.

Mr. Helms.

Do you, Mr. Helms, solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office which you are about to enter, so help you God?

MR. HELMS: I do.

END

10:10 A.M. EDST